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ABSTRACT

The Postsecondary Program School-to-Work Transition Activity in Carroll County Public Schools (Maryland) has been identified as an exemplary school-to-work program that includes students with disabilities. This program serves 25 students aged 17-21 with disabilities in a noncategorical setting with a large majority of students having significant disabilities or mental retardation. Students who have completed a secondary special education program, participated in graduation ceremonies, and are eligible for a certificate of attendance or diploma can apply for entrance into the program. Class instruction consists of the following: social skills training, employment searching, skills for maintaining a job, appropriate peer interactions on the job, computer keyboarding, life fitness, and residential living skills. The job experience is built in as a half or full day depending on the student's needs and aptitude. Students work 5 afternoons and attend classes in the morning. Typically, they are in the program 1-2 years; during the final year, they work full time. The program has the three basic elements of school-to-work: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. Both job shadowing and job coaching are provided. Connecting activities are collaboration between the school, community businesses, and service providers and residential experience. (YLB)

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Post Secondary Program School-to-Work Transition Activity

Carroll County Public Schools
55 North Court Street
Westminster, MD 21157
(410) 751-3033

ED 420 800

Mission/Goals

To provide opportunities for students with developmental disabilities to learn about and experience independent employment. The goals of the program are to (*a*) provide students with work experience in a structured setting, (*b*) develop students' career awareness and positive work attitude, (*c*) foster their independent work ethic and self advocacy, (*d*) increase their quality and speed of work, and (*e*) enhance self-esteem by increasing their options and opportunities.

Organization/Program Context

In December of 1993 there was a planning meeting between various service providers, Carroll Community College, Carroll County Public Schools, students, and parents to discuss the progression of services and changes in the graduation policy for students with developmental disabilities. The spring of 1995 saw the birth of a pilot program in the form of contracted teaching at the Carroll Community College. It included twelve 20 year old students, taking 2 classes, 3 days a week. Carroll Community College staff were employed to provide direct instruction to students in computer keyboarding skills and life fitness. The program was set up to provide students with half a day of community college experience and the other half day with either paid or volunteer work experience. In addition, a local adult care provider who also provided job training for adults with disabilities, was contracted to provide a residential living experience. The work experience was eventually increased to a full day for students attending the program for two consecutive years. Support staff or job coaches were hired to assist and coach students as they learned a new job or a skill. Once the student had acquired the skill, the job coach moved on to another student while periodically following-up on the student. The Post Secondary Program is now an integral part of the Carroll County Public Schools.

Description

Students who have completed a secondary special education program, participated in graduation ceremonies, and are eligible for a certificate of attendance or diploma can apply for entrance into the Post Secondary Program. The application includes a statement of interests, career and personal goals. Students are admitted into the program based primarily on the individualized education plan done with the student, parents, and the staff of the school. Once accepted into the program, the students begin class instruction and the activity. Instruction consists of social skills training, employment searching, skills for maintaining a job, appropriate peer interactions on the job,

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Community Setting

Rural area with emphasis on farming and minor manufacturing. Western Maryland College, a four year liberal arts college, and Carroll Community College provide post-secondary education options for area residents. Westminster, Maryland is located approximately 40 miles from Baltimore and 60 miles from Washington, D. C.

Population Served

Twenty-five students are served ranging in age from 17 to 21. The program serves students with disabilities in a noncategorical setting with a large majority of the students having significant disabilities and or mental retardation. Areas of primary disability include learning disabilities, emotional behavior disorders, orthopedic impairments, speech and language impairments, autism and other health impairments. The program is available to any student regardless of his or her disability or the severity of the disability.

CE076802

Program Staff

Teacher/Coordinator
1 full time

- Coordinates the day-to-day program operations
- Manages student schedules and job placements
- Supervises student job placements

Employment Specialist/ Job Developer
3 Hourly Employees 7 Hours Per Day

- Provides supervision of students within the educational environment, the community college and the community
- Provides job-coaching at work locations
- Provide behavior management delivery
- Provide for student personal care needs

Instructional Staff
Contracted through various agencies as needed

- Provide direct instruction to students in areas of functional academics, job searching skills, residential living and job training
- Work one-on-one and with groups of students in a variety of settings

computer keyboarding, life fitness, and residential living skills. In addition, the actual job experience is built in as a half or a full day depending on the individual student's needs and aptitude. All of the work activities are selected based on student interview, parent interview and needs assessment, local employer needs assessment, adult care providers, and the local school staff. Students usually volunteer until a successful match between a student and an employer is made. The volunteer and/or the employment experience is set up through the program coordinator who contacts employers, checks on job vacancies and attempts to match students based on their interest and aptitude. The students work 5 afternoons and attend classes in the morning.

Typically the students are in the program one or two years. During the final year, students work full-time. The number of students in the program vary. At the time of publication, there were 19 students in the program all of whom are in community based opportunities.

Exemplary School-to-Work Components

School-based learning

Word Processing. The word processing course provides students an opportunity to learn how to use the computer as a tool for written communications to produce letters of application and develop resumes.

Life Fitness. The life fitness course provides students with a wide variety of learning opportunities about health and nutrition as well as exercise, life time sports, and recreational activities.

Work-based learning

Job shadowing. An adult is present in the work area with a student for the student's safety and comfort as well as to provide assistance as needed. This is not a continuous service and will be decreased as the student's independence on the job increases.

Job coaching. An adult works side-by-side with a student teaching and training him/her on the job. This affords the student an appropriate model for task completion and appropriate on-the-job behavior.

Connecting Activities

Collaboration. Collaboration between the school, community businesses, Department of Rehabilitative Services, and other service providers gives students opportunities to gain various job skills and independent living skills. It also helps to provide a complete program with appropriate follow-up services for students after they exit the school system.

Residential Experience. The residential living experience provides the students with opportunities to spend at least one week in a local bed and breakfast. During this period the student is with no more than three other students and is under the supervision of a qualified adult service provider. While in the residential placement students prepare their own meals, clean their rooms, make their beds, and utilize decision making skills to determine leisure time activities and budget their financial allocation for the week.

What Makes it Work?

- Older students who have not yet received their high school diplomas are taken out of the high school setting into an age appropriate community college setting for the required learning experiences.

- Students are given a wide selection of courses which prepare them for work and independent living including a one week stay at Winchester Country Inn for a residential living experience.
- Students and staff work very closely to determine various work options for the students. A careful matching of the student and employer is obtained.
- Staff are dedicated and sensitive to the needs of the students and the employers.
- A careful collaboration exists between a variety of agencies to provide a complete program with appropriate follow-up services after the student exits the school system. This is maintained by including all the collaborators in the annual meetings where student needs and programs are discussed.
- There is extensive parent involvement during the entire process. This is achieved by having parents of the students attend all the meetings involving student progress, having at least 2 parent nights, and encouraging them to visit both the program as well as the student's work location.
- Students learn to self-advocate by role playing in a speech and language development series. In addition, they are actively involved in all decision makings.

Johnny's Story

Johnny is a 20 year old student with moderate mental retardation and emotional/behavior disability. Characteristics associated with his disability have been the main factors in Johnny exhibiting several inappropriate behaviors.

In the Spring of 1994, Johnny joined the Post-Secondary Program as a part-time student. He participated in a program which focused on job readiness skills and on-the-job training which helped him explore his interests, aptitudes and skills. From April 1994 to November 1995, Johnny volunteered as a landscaper at the Carroll County Farm Museum. His job duties included edging and weeding, raking and bagging leaves, and collecting trash. This experience helped Johnny develop his career awareness, positive work attitudes, work independence, and self-esteem.

By October 1995, Johnny expressed an interest in working in a fast food restaurant and in November, 1995 he went for his first interview and was hired at a fast food restaurant in a part-time, competitive employment position. Johnny began working as a host in the dining room with the help of a job coach.

At the start of the 1995-96 school year, Johnny's second year, he continued in the program as a full-time student. During the fall semester, Johnny took three courses in the morning and worked every afternoon at the restaurant. His fall courses included personal fitness, introduction to computers and career exploration. Johnny successfully completed fall semester at Carroll Community College and enrolled for the spring semester taking courses which focused on vocational skills, residential living skills, decision making skills, and job interview skills.

Johnny has acquired many new skills on the job. By the time Johnny exits the school system, he will be working full-time with the natural supports of his coworkers, managers and the owner of the restaurant, accomplishing his goal of independent community employment.

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For Further Information

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http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/schooltowork/

School-to-work is described in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

School to work is . . .

A System built to provide opportunities for students to learn about and experience work while in school.

Educational Reform that addresses the need for students to gain work experience and workplace skills while in school.

Partnerships between schools, employers and communities.

For <u>All</u> Students, kindergarten through 12th grade.

School-to-Work Outreach Project Overview

The School-to-Work Outreach Project at the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) is a nationwide, three year project funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This project assists and supports school-to-work initiatives through the identification of exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies that include students with disabilities. Exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies are identified through a five step selection process:

- **Nomination**
- **Application**
- **Reference**
- **Application Review**
- **Final Review and Selection**

Identification Criteria and School-to-Work Priority Areas, established by the School-to-Work Outreach Project, guide the application review.

Profiles of the identified models/practices/strategies are available upon request. Adoption and replication of these exemplary school-to-work activities is encouraged and technical assistance is available to schools and organizations interested in implementing these models/practices/strategies or improving existing school-to-work activities and systems. Contact the School-to-Work Outreach Project at the above address for further information.

Basic Elements of School-to-Work

School-based Learning - Instruction and experiences based on academic and occupational standards.

Work-based Learning - Workplace experience, structured training, mentoring and apprenticeships at job sites.

Connecting Activities - A variety of activities that build and maintain bridges between school, work and other adult environments.

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